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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000151

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E

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SUBJECT: Zanzibar's Voter Registration on Track after Rocky Start

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason 1.4(b)

REF: A) Dar es Salaam 57, B) 03 Dar es Salaam 2633, C) 03 Dar es Salaam 2602, D) 03 Dar es Salaam 2341

11. (C) Summary: Voter registration is now proceeding on schedule, after an initial spate of violent confrontations that had forced the temporary closure of several South Pemba voter registration centers in early December. Teams from the Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) completed their work on Pemba, where they registered a high percentage of eligible voters, and moved on to the north of Unguja Island on January 15. While registration process is now running smoothly, partisan tensions persist, and each passing week brings a new rumor about plots to manipulate the voters' register. Donor-country diplomats are exploring how to support the process, in the light of strong governmental signals from President Mkapa, Zanzibari President Karume and others, that foreign observation is not wanted. The current consensus among the diplomats: they will observe registration in small, inconspicuous groups for now; they will maintain dialogue with leaders of both major parties, making a special effort to reach out to the CCM; they will seek ways to support civic education and domestic observation missions. End Summary

On Schedule and According to Procedure  
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12. (U) Despite the considerable challenges, Zanzibar's voter registration process has maintained its integrity and its schedule. Although sporadic violence during the first days of registration had forced the temporary closure of several registration centers (See ref tel D), the ZEC's teams finished registering voters on the southern half of Pemba Island as planned on Dec. 21. On Jan 14, they completed registration in northern Pemba, and moved to the Northern region of Unguja (Zanzibar's "main island.") Next, the teams register voters in Unguja's South region, before completing registration in Unguja's Urban West region sometime in April.

13. To date, the process has generally been credible and orderly. A high percentage of eligible voters, whose number have been estimated from 2002 Census data, are registering. TEMCO, a Tanzanian voter observation NGO, reports that 83 percent of eligible voters registered in South Pemba. Observers from TEMCO and elsewhere nonetheless noted some problems, especially the controversial, but completely legal, registration of newly-transferred members of government militias. In some districts, the local shehas (the generally pro-CCM ward heelers) still exercise undue influence in determining which individuals meet residency requirements, even though the Muafaka reforms limit the shehas to an advisory role. The opposition CUF, for its part, reportedly encouraged Pemban voters living on the mainland to come home to register, even though many had difficulty meeting the three-year residency requirement. The Norwegian academic and longtime observer of the Zanzibari scene, Dr. Kjetil Tronvoll, opined that while such tactics undoubtedly aggravated partisan tension, they were unlikely to affect any electoral outcomes in the CUF party's Pemba stronghold. Dr. Tronvoll, TEMCO and other observers believe that the ZEC has generally handled these controversies with fairness and professionalism.

Flashpoints and the Conspiracy du Jour  
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14. (C) Zanzibar is nonetheless highly partisan, and its political tensions will only increase as election day approaches. Already, rumors of plots and conspiracies abound. As registration proceeds, the ZEC will be constantly challenged to respond to legitimate complaints as well as to quell irrational

fears about the fairness of the process. In his remarks to a group of donor country diplomats, Dr. Tronvoll outlined potential flashpoints for voter registration on Zanzibar. He noted that Ungunja is more politically mixed than the solidly pro-CUF Pemba, and that registration shenanigans on Ungunja are therefore more likely to influence electoral outcomes. Competition between the Karume faction of Zanzibar's CCM party and the Bilal/Salim Amour faction could yet split the CCM, which would have the greatest impact in Amour's North Ungunja stronghold. A CCM split could even tilt North Ungunja to the opposition CUF. Some Ungunja shehas may try to rely on the unofficial census they conducted in mid 2004 to determine eligibility for registration, inevitably sparking protests from CUF partisans who consider the sheha census illegitimate and skewed to CCM. Registration in Urban West region may pose the biggest risk of confrontation, and the one most likely to affect international tourism, since Stonetown and its environs are the CUF's most important stronghold on CCM-leaning Ungunja.

#### Warning Signs from the Government

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15. (C) The government and the ruling CCM party, meanwhile, may be less than fully supportive of Zanzibar's voter registration; at the very least, they seem increasingly wary of any kind of foreign assistance or observation. Dr. Tronvoll concluded that a faction of Zanzibar's CCM loyalists simply wanted to disrupt the voter registration process. In the January 20 discussion, Tronvoll remarked that the widely documented efforts to register short-term transferees from the government security forces were blunt, blatant, and unlikely to influence electoral outcomes in any case. He thought that the only logical objective of such tactics was to provoke confrontation and provide an excuse to suspend voter registration. A month earlier, CUF Secretary General Seif Sharraf Hamad had voiced essentially the same suspicion.

16. (U) More worrisome have been the recent signals, strong, unambiguous and emanating from the highest levels of the government, warning non-Africans to keep their distance from the upcoming elections. Zanzibar President Karume opened the New Year by inaugurating the ZEC's new headquarters and lecturing the assembled donors for assuming that an election is only democratic if an opposition party wins it (ref A). Days later, at his annual sherry party, President Mkapa cast his lot with the CCM hardliners with his pointed comment that the CCM was strong, and didn't need to cheat to win. On January 12, President Karume welcomed Zimbabwean President Mugabe as his official guest at Zanzibar Day ceremonies, sending a none-too-subtle signal that African ruling parties might stand in solidarity to support their vision of "democracy." (See Septel.) Karume also reiterated the discredited account of the foreign diplomat who had interfered in voter registration without the knowledge of Zanzibar's government. (In fact, almost a dozen diplomats had observed registration December 2 at the invitation of the ZEC and the Foreign Ministry, as reported in Reftel D.) This sudden skittishness about the foreign presence in Zanzibar extends to the working level: Dr. Tronvoll reported that his most recent request for an extension of Zanzibari research permit had been denied.

#### Next Steps for Donors and Diplomats

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17. (C) A group of donor country diplomats, invited to the Norwegian Embassy January 20 to hear Dr. Tronvoll's remarks on his Zanzibar research, discussed their next steps. In addition to the Norwegian hosts, the group included representatives from the US, UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, the EU, and the UNDP. The gathering provided an opportunity for the USAID Democracy and Governance officer to present the first newsletter from the Tanzanian voter observation consortium TEMCO, which receives ESF funding through the NGO REDET to observe voter registration on Zanzibar. After discussion, the group arrived at the following consensus:

-- Donor country diplomats should lower their profile for near term. While it is important that they continue to observe voter registration on Zanzibar, they should do so in smaller, more inconspicuous groups.

-- Diplomats should continue to maintain a dialogue

with both major parties. They should make a special effort to reach out to an embattled and defensive CCM.

-- The donors should seek additional sources of funding and technical support to expand TEMCO observation project, as well as to support other domestic NGOs involved in observing elections or in conducting voter education.

-- The UNDP should convene regular meetings so donor country diplomats can monitor the situation as it develops, and readjust their strategy as necessary. The situation may merit particular attention in late March, when the ZEC registration teams prepare to move from Unguja's solidly CCM North and South regions to the pro-CUF Urban West.

18. (C) Comment: Zanzibar's voter registration is going well for now, but the situation bears constant monitoring. Renewed disputes and even violence could break out at any time. The informal diplomats' group provides a useful tool for building consensus, and for supporting voter registration. The group nonetheless recognizes it has a fundamental problem: it is too white, too European. An embattled CCM could easily play the anti-colonial card and rally Africa's less democratic elements in response to international criticism about Zanzibar's conduct of its elections. In past discussions, members of this informal group have sought to support the Tanzanian NGOs that promote democracy and to reach out to African diplomats. It is proving difficult, however, to find many Tanzanian democracy NGOs with sufficient capacity, or to persuade African diplomats here to take a public stand on the democracy issue. End Comment.

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